

POLICY TITLE: CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES		
ADOPTION/EFFECTIVE DATE:	MOST RECENTLY AMENDED:	MOST RECENTLY REAFFIRMED: May 6, 2022
POLICY/PROCEDURE MANUAL SUMMARY CATEGORY: Instruction		

I. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set forth the position and philosophy of the Board of Education (BOE) regarding controversial issues and to support our educators in managing those issues.

II. Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions apply:

- A. **Controversial Issues:** A Controversial issue means a subject or matter about which there are significant differences of opinion.
- B. **Bias:** An inclination or prejudice for or against an idea, person, or group, especially when it compromises fairness and objectivity.
- C. **Neutral:** Allowing for differing opinions without expressing one's own; considering opinions without bias.
- D. **Age appropriate:** activities or items that are generally accepted as suitable for children of the same chronological age or level of maturity or that are determined to be developmentally-appropriate for a child, based on the development of cognitive, emotional, physical, and behavioral capacities that are typical for an age or age group.

III. Statement of Policy

- A. In providing for the study and discussion of such issues, the school system strives to maintain a balanced, neutral position. Educators are trained and trusted to exercise professional judgment when Controversial issues are presented and discussed in school classrooms and to consider the level of maturity of the students. Such study shall be objective and scholarly, allowing students the opportunity to collect and assemble factual information on the subject, to interpret the data without prejudice, to reconsider assumptions and claims, and to reach personal conclusions. Students must be encouraged to search after truth as well as to form, express, and justify personal views in controversial issues. Educators will guard against sharing personal opinions and will use professional judgement to decide when an opinion

- can be used and when staying neutral can help to empower students to make judgements on their own.
- B. The educator has the obligation to assist students in achieving a scholarly competence, to teach factual information and concepts upon which truth is based, to help students develop a respect for factual knowledge as the basis for critical thought, to avoid discussion of issues beyond the comprehension and maturity of students, to lead students to recognize that some problems and issues escape solution, and to demonstrate a deep respect for the dignity of each student and his/her right to express opinions without jeopardizing relationships with the teachers of the school.
- C. Educators may express opinions regarding controversial issues, provided the educator presents such views in accordance with this policy and provided the educator makes it clear that the teacher's statement represents his/her opinion only. While the educator has the right to express opinions regarding controversial issues, the educator shall ensure that students have been permitted the opportunity to assess facts and draw their own conclusions. Educators shall welcome and respect differing opinions.
- D. Adherence to Legal Requirements
- This policy is intended to be consistent with all applicable laws and regulations, including but not limited to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA).
- E. Training on this policy shall be provided to all HCPS staff members upon hire, with bi-annual updates provided.

Board Approval Acknowledged By:

Sean W. Bulson, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Policy Action Dates					
ACTION	DATE	ACTION	DATE	ACTION	DATE
Reaffirmed	5/12/1980				
Reaffirmed	10/26/1998				
Reaffirmed	5/6/2002				

Responsibility for Policy Maintenance & References	
LAST EDITOR/DRAFTER NAME: Kimberly Neal, Esquire	JOB POSITION OF LAST EDITOR/DRAFTER: General Counsel
PERSON RESPONSIBLE:	JOB POSITION OF PERSON RESPONSIBLE:
DESIGNEE NAME:	JOB POSITION OF DESIGNEE:
POLICY NUMBER PRIOR TO NOVEMBER 1, 2005:	

LEGAL REFERENCES¹

References are set forth in the Policy.

¹ All references are to specific federal or Maryland statutes or regulations. References are provided for convenience and informational purposes only and are not to be considered as exhaustive or as precluding Harford County Public Schools from relying upon any other statutes or regulations in support of a policy or procedure.